

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
February 21, 2013
TESTIMONY OF CO-OP AFTER SCHOOL (CAS)

2/24/2014

To The Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Kjerstin Pugh and Director of Co-Op After School, a fortunate recipient of the Connecticut Department of Education's After-School Grant. Dwight Hall at Yale, the Shubert Theater and Co-Op High School partner to provide quality after school programming that is available at no cost to every Co-Op student.

Today I pledge my support for the State of Connecticut to reinstate Full After School Grant Funding by adding \$3.9 million to the After School Grant line in the Department of Education budget, reinstate "After School Quality Enhancement" by adding \$150,000 to the After School Quality Enhancement line in the Department of Education budget, and to create a new Summer Learning Grant Program. These are all necessary steps to take to ensure the success of after school and summer learning and enrichment opportunities for our state's young people.

Firsthand experience has taught me that funding for after school and summer opportunities is always beneficial to our youth. There is always a need in all communities for young people to have productive, meaningful experiences outside of their school day. Not all schools are able to provide after school and summer programming, job training programs, or college readiness classes, but these experience are vital for our young people to be successful, well-rounded, and tuned-in to their schools, communities, and the world around them.

In just four years, Co-Op After School—or CAS— has grown from offering 5 after school arts programs to 40 arts and enrichment programs per semester. Students rely on CAS to be not only a safe place to explore, learn, and grow, but also as a tool for their futures. All of our programs are extracurricular activities that students can include on college applications and resumes. Our students consistently report that their academic achievement and school day attendance is positively influenced by their participation in after school, that they use their

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experiences in after school on their college and job applications, and that they feel a great sense of community and support through CAS.

Through our partnership with the Shubert Theater for the past few summers we have offered job opportunities to our high school students to work at our summer camp; this year, we are able to expand the job training program they participate in, from a one-week sessions to a month-long program. The growth and success of our after school programming and summer job training program can be directly attributed to receiving state funding.

Our state funding also creates jobs for teachers, artists and school administrators, local nonprofit agencies, and members of the greater Co-Op community, such as alumni and parents. Each year, over \$44,000 of our state funding goes to these invaluable instructors.

My wish is for the state to continue and increase funding that will create safe and productive out-of-school spaces for students throughout Connecticut. It is vital for these individuals as well as our communities and state. Everyone benefits from after school and summer programming. All students should have access to opportunities, regardless of anything else.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely yours,

Kjerstin Pugh